United Nations

Press Release

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ General Assembly takes up new agenda item on situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina at resumed forty-sixth session; hears message by Secretary-General.

+ Secretary-General, in London for International Conference on former Yugoslavia, will meet tomorrow with British Prime Minister John Major to discuss preparations for Conference.

+ Secretary-General urges Government of Afghanistan and all other parties involved in fighting in Kabul to exercise restraint and resolve their differences through dialogue; assures continued United Nations humanitarian aid to Afghan people.

+ Secretary-General asks his Special Representative for Western Sahara, Sahabzada Yaqub-Khan, to hold new round of talks with Government of Morocco and POLISARIO; talks will begin in New York tomorrow, according to United Nations spokeswoman.

+ "Heaviest shelling and fighting in weeks" reported from Sarajevo on Sunday; shelling continuing today.

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The General Assembly began this morning, at its resumed its forty-sixth session, a consideration of a new agenda item on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina as recommended by the General Committee. The agenda item had been requested by Turkey, on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

In a message read out by Benon Sevan, Assistant Secretary-General in the Department of Political Affairs, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali welcomed the initiative to convene the resumed Assembly session on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Its deliberations would help underline the "great concern" of the international community about the continuing bloodshed and the violations of human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the need for an urgent peaceful solution in conformity with the United Nations Charter.

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In his message, the Secretary-General expressed the hope that the London Conference on former Yugoslavia, would provide new impetus to the efforts to arrive at a negotiated settlement of the crisis in all its aspects. He said the debate today and the adoption of the draft resolution would be an important contribution to the success of the London Conference and to the resolution of the Yugoslav problem.

The Representative of Turkey, Mustafa Aksin, told the Assembly that today's debate should send a clear meassage to those responsible for the mayhem in Bosnia and Herzegovina that further violence and defiance of international norms would not be allowed. The Organization of the Islamic Conference had prepared a draft resolution which was designed to stop the fighting and reassert the principles of international law. It demanded respect for the sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina; supported the actions already taken in the Security Council and other organs of the United Nations; sought to alleviate the plight of the victims of ethnic cleansing; identified those who must bear the main responsibility for the tragedy; and reaffirmed the principle that territory cannot be acquired nor borders changed by the use of force.

The Assembly will continue its debate tomorrow and is expected to take action on the draft resolution.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who is in London to co-chair the International Conference on the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on Wednesday, 26 August, will meet tomorrow with British Prime Minister John Major to discuss preparations for the Conference.

Following the conclusion of the Conference on Thursday afternoon, the Secretary-General and the Prime Minister will hold a joint press conference.

The Secretary-General's delegation to the Conference is composed of Cyrus Vance, Special Representative on Yugoslavia; Vladimir Petrovsky, Under-Secretary-General for Political Afairs; Marrack Goulding, Under-Secretary-General for Peace-keeping Operations; Jan Eliasson, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs; and Sadako Ogata, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has urged the Government of Afghanistan and all other parties involved in the fighting in Kabul to exercise restraint and resolve their differences through a dialogue. In a telephone conversation with Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani on Saturday, 22 August, he also reiterated the readiness of the United Nations to continue to provide humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan.

According to a statement issued by the Secretary-General's Spokesman on Saturday, President Rabbani, while expressing his Government's appreciation of

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the efforts of the Secretary-General and the United Nations in providing humanitarian assistance to the Afghans, requested the Secretary-General to mobilize the international community to provide the much-needed assistance to the people whose suffering had increased due to recent tragic events.

The Secretary-General assured President Rabbani that no effort would be spared in mobilizing international assistance to the Afghans and that a United Nations interagency team was currently finalizing its assessment of the additional requirements for assistance.

The President, in turn, assured the Secretary-General that his Government would ensure for the safety and security of all diplomatic missions, and the United Nations as well as their personnel and property in Kabul.

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The Secretary-General has asked his Special Representative for Western Sahara, Sahabzada Yaqub-Khan, to hold a new round of talks with the Government of Morocco and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Rio de Oro (POLISARIO). According to the Secretary-General's Spokeswoman today, the talks, which were scheduled to begin today, "might be postponed" until tomorrow, 25 August, because the arrival of the POLISARIO delegation had been delayed.

In his report to the Security Council, dated 20 August, the Secretary-General said he was "encouraged by the progress achieved until now" in his Special Representative's talks with the parties. He said it remained to be seen, however, "whether the parties are willing to go far enough in adjusting their positions so as to make it possible to advance in real and concrete terms towards the holding of a referendum" for the Territory. Document S/24464

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A United Nations spokeswoman reported today that "the heaviest shelling and fighting in weeks" had occured in Sarajevo on Sunday, 23 August, and the airport had been closed for two hours. In spite of the fighting on Sunday, 18 humanitarian flights had landed at Sarajevo airport. The shelling was continuing today, she said.

Only five or six flights had landed at Sarajevo airport today, but a full schedule of flights was expected for tomorrow.

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